

# Vote yes for Mass & Main

Seth Zeren <seth.zeren@gmail.com>

Wed 5/13/2015 12:36 PM

City Clerk Agenda

To:Lopez, Donna <dlopez@cambridgema.gov>; City Council <CityCouncil@CambridgeMA.GOV>;

Hello,

I am writing to express my support for the Mass and Main proposal. I have previously articulated my support for the project. I won't repeat those arguments here, but I will include something that I wrote to my neighborhood newsletter in response to some negative comments. I hope that the project moves forward next week. Thank you,

\*\*\*

I was unable to attend these meetings because of work responsibilities, but I did contribute letters expressing my support for development in Central Square. My understanding is that the numbers were pretty evenly divided on support and opposition. I wish that opponents of the project could acknowledge that there are real and sincere differences of opinion within the City instead of insisting that theirs is the position of the neighborhood against the evil developers. I can empathize with some of the opponents. I personally don't love this project--generally I prefer mid-rise to high-rise construction.

But I do recognize the trade-offs that must be made in order to get things that I do like: more housing in Cambridge, in a walkable transit served location, both affordable and market rate (we need both!). New retail activation and a sense of entry to the eastern end of Central Square, holding the line on providing more parking to encourage more car free and reduced car living, etc. Certainly the building should it ever be built won't be for everyone (I wouldn't want to live there), but it will meet some needs in the City. Office rents are higher per square foot than residential rents, so more density is required to make the projects equivalent. You may not feel that the trade offs are worth it--that's fine. I and many other residents do. Cambridge is becoming unaffordable even to upper middle income dual income professionals because of its excellent location, amenities, and neighborhoods. Stopping construction won't stop the process of transformation.

In another political climate, I would probably be on the other side of the fence, trying to wring better urban design out of the project. But the tenor of the opposition has really turned me off. The attempt to use rezoning to preserve surface parking lots in a downtown was probably where you lost me and others of my generation who see dense walkable mixed use places (like Cambridge) as the future, and want to turn parking lots into places. I hear what you're saying about not being opposed to all development or against change, but to me it doesn't line up with the stands that are taken. The proposed development on Essex street was much smaller than the Mass & Main proposal, and it too faced a storm of opposition. So what would be a good project? Is that building practical and economical to build? If not, who's going to provide the subsidy? How much are the tax-payers paying to get those affordable units? It's easy to say how the world ought to be, but I know from my own work as a planner and now as a developer it's a lot harder to bring those changes to reality.

Seth Zeren  
183 Chestnut St.